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ABSTRACT

Focusing on recent composition theory, this paper offers suggestions for writing teachers in applying concepts of dialogic discourse directly to the pedagogy of the college writing course. The first section of the paper addresses the influence of the social constructionist work on interpretation theory by Richard Rorty, Clifford Geertz, and Stanley Fish on composition theorists such as Kenneth Bruffee, John Trimbur, and Harvey Wiener. The second section deals with the function of text in a writing classroom and how concepts of textuality help control the dialogic process considered central to literacy while examining the metaphors and the different cultural perspectives of Wolfgang Iser, Mikhail Bakhtin, E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and Kenneth Burke for help in formulating a useful method of directing collaborative learning. The third section presents a detailed analysis of Stephen Jay Gould's "The Guano Ring" as an example of scientific writing that uses narrative and dramatic structure to explore phenomena that writers and readers experience together but that retains the basic heuristic characteristic of the scientist. The final section of the paper uses Gould's essay as the basis for two sequences of classroom activities that work toward turning informed readers into writers who can use their understanding of intratextuality as they write. The first sequence involves students in dialogic responses to particular expressions in Gould's text, while the second proposes a prereading sequence of activities to help students appreciate the interplay of subtexts in Gould's essay. Footnotes and references are appended. (NKA)

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ED284239

Joseph J. Comprone

"The Function of Text in a Dialogic Writing Course"

I. Social Constructionism and Composition

Much work in composition and literary theory has recently focused on monologic and dialogic perspectives on literacy. The monologic perspective evolves naturally, these theories contend, from Western traditions of written literacy, from fifth-century Greece through the age of Gutenberg, the middle and late Renaissance's technical proliferation of the printed word into commercial and mass educational contexts, culminating in nineteenth-century romanticism's emphasis on writing as an expressive projection of inner self, the product of introspection and intuition rather than social negotiation. The dialogic perspective, on the other hand, has its roots in oral literacy, in the participatory narratives and eristics of oral cultures, where, at best, writing was a subordinate and technical rather than primary medium. In these primarily oral cultures, the "presence," the transitoriness of sound dominated over the potential permanence but essentially undramatic and psychologistic qualities of writing.[1]

All this theory often seems far removed from the literacy we try to create in our writing classrooms. But recently composition theorists such as Kenneth Bruffee, John Trimbur, Harvey Wiener, and others have attempted to apply these theories of monologic and dialogic discourse directly to the pedagogy of the college writing course.[2] Under various headings--collaborative learning, peer tutoring and teaching, workshopping, negotiation of meaning, holistic assessment--these scholars have drawn on the social

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constructionist work in interpretation theory of Richard Rorty in Philosophy, Clifford Geertz in Anthropology, and Stanley Fish in literary theory to posit systems of learning that are essentially dialogic in nature and form.[3] To these theorists neither reading nor writing is essentially a private act. Rather, the fact that both are usually carried out in physical isolation from one another superficially keeps us from understanding reading and writing as essentially social enterprises. Any act of literacy, however physically separated from social activity, is essentially a re-affirmation of shared community conventions, a dramatic enterprise in which individual writers and readers work with a socially-constructed language and rhetoric to create an original social perspective. From this vantage point, writing and reading are socialized ways of knowing, not media overlays on what we already know.

Working from this theory, students learn by negotiation, by interaction and eristic give and take; they do not become literate by doing mechanical "skill" exercises in isolation, nor can they learn by going off into their own romantic ivory towers, there to struggle alone with meaning, developing their texts monologically. Rather they must dirty their authorial hands with the business of social negotiation and drama in the form of workshop interaction, varied editing groups, collaborative writing projects, and the taking and re-taking of positions and roles within an ongoing drama of composing.

The social construction theorists have moved us in the right direction, away from the romantic agony of private composition toward the healthier dialectic of shared knowledge and expression. They have, to some degree, knocked writing off of its pedastal in the museum of literacy and put

it back into the dialogic context of all language arts--speaking, listening, and visual-spatial perception taking an equal place with reading and writing within the overall context of higher literacy. This move is certainly to be applauded. But in this paper I wish to begin to fill some gaps that have appeared between social constructionist theory and writing pedagogy.

II. Concepts of Textuality and the Dialogic Process

The "black hole" of social constructionist composition theory exists around our concepts, as teachers of reading and writing, of textuality. What is a text? Better yet, what functions does a text fulfill in a writing classroom? And most important, how do our concepts of textuality help control the dialogic process that we have come to understand as central to literacy?

These are big questions, too large to be answered fully here. But we can begin to shape an answer by fastening on several metaphors, which when considered together, might provide a definition of the place of written text in the linguistic give-and-take of dialogic literacy. Both Wolfgang Iser and Mikhail Bakhtin, working from very different cultural perspectives, try to help us imagine a literary text as a new kind of object.[4] They are similar enough in their conceptions of texts to be related in a general way to reader-response and radical subjectivist critics who argue that texts as physical, palpable objects are not what they seem.[5] They are not flat containers, directly spelling out the meaning intended by an author. But both Iser and Bakhtin are also similar, in a dialogic way, to those, like E.D. Hirsch, Jr., who see physical texts as psychologically determinant.[6]

What language in a particular social context finally comes to mean is determined to an important degree by the function if not the palpable shape and form of written texts.

This seemingly paradoxical pairing of subjectivist and objectivist theorists is best illustrated by a comparison with the more extreme reader-response critics who dismiss the authority of the text almost entirely. Texts, to dialogic critics, are not simply catalysts of personal feelings and response, as David Bleich and other subjective critics suggest in their earlier work.[7] Rather they are physical presences imposing themselves on the consciousness of individuals and communities of text producers and consumers. Their presence may not determine meaning, but as Jon Culler and, in a more conservative way, Hirsch, contend, the presence of texts certainly alters our consciousness as readers and writers of both the epistemological and conventional bases of literacy.[8] Both the shape of the text, and its function as a vehicle in the process of reading and interpretation, are major influences on individual acts of shaping and forming meaning in literate cultures.

It is in this paradoxical understanding of text as literally indeterminate but figuratively and socially determinate that writing teachers can find a useful method of directing collaborative learning. Iser and Bakhtin offer us metaphors that, when applied to text, explain this paradoxical function and turn textuality into a process that can help us, as writing teachers, provide a dialogic classroom with strategies of teaching that partake of the conventions of both oral and written literacy. The most important of these textual metaphors resides in the concept of a text as

containing gaps, holes, apertures, or openings --psychological spaces through which the reader and potential writer looks through the palpable, written text. Every written text, in other words, contains at least two kinds of space--physical space marked by letters and the gaps between them and psychological space marked by those places in a text where "loopholes" exist, where readers literally but subjectively look through a text to what they suppose, directed by the conventions learned through previous reading and writing, might be the responses of their readers.[9] In other words, every act of responding to a written text includes in one form or another a kind of intersubjective gap-filling in which readers see through the text, not to the author, but to other readers and into the complex but finite array of conventional and original responses that might be used to fill these gaps and holes. Monologic literacy, although it may seem on the surface to be one-dimensional, is always multi-dimensional, with imagined interlocutors playing a role in writers' and readers' consciousnesses. Perceiving opportunities to fill openings with intersubjective meaning, then, is one of the literate person's primary imaginative tools, but it is also based on that person's use of literate conventions. Originality grows from and depends upon shared, social convention.

The pedagogical point implied in this dialogic understanding of the function of text is that teachers who believe that writing must be taught collaboratively must themselves come to a more balanced understanding of the place and function of texts in workshops and discussions. What does it mean to have a text serve a dialogic function in a writer's workshop? And, once that meaning is defined, what kinds of activities are best suited to give

students an inductive understanding of dialogic consciousness and method?

Let us imagine ourselves participating in a classroom workshop in some way rooted in a written text that all participants in the workshop have read. Should we leave the text behind us as the dialogue progresses, moving from text as catalyst into subjective response and forward to negotiated, socially-constructed meaning? Or should we pull the text along with us--not as the extreme New Critic might, taking references to text as conclusive evidence for carefully-contrived critical judgments--but as a group interested in using text as an artifact through which the members of the workshop can direct their intersubjective responses? One workshop member's attempt to fill a gap becomes another's eristic opportunity. The pattern of meaning socially and textually constructed up to a particular point in workshop discussion is one reader-respondent's way of explaining a pattern that exists only in potential in the text itself, and it is another respondent's way of both appreciating and revising, even opposing, the first respondent's attempt at gap-filling. From this dialogic perspective, a text functions much like a grid or sifter through which responding readers filter their personal responses. As sifter or grid, the text must never be left behind, even in the most dialogic of classes, because dialogism itself, as Bakhtin and Vygotsky both have told us, must be rooted in literacy, and literacy, for us, evolves from an awareness of the social conventions we reinforce and share through texts.[10]

Before we go on to apply this model of textuality to the classroom, we might look to Kenneth Burke for further clarification of the functions of textuality in an essentially dialogic process. Two concepts from Burke's

dramatistic perspective on literarcy and rhetoric that have not gotten much recent attention from either critics or compositionists seem important here: the idea of texts as "terministic screens" and the notion of "perspectives by incongruity."[11] I shall begin applying Burke to Bakhtin in a model of dialogic literacy by using "perspectives by incongruity" to explain the ideal situation of readers confronted with texts to which they are expected to respond critically. Objective theorists of literacy would argue that effective reading involves a one-dimensional or linear perspective on text, a complex perspective in its use of genres and conventions outside the text itself, but essentially linear and monologic nonetheless. Burke, in contrast, presents us with a metaphor for critical reading in which the reader's perspective on text is an appreciation of and a working through of an essentially incongrous array of terminological sets, with the text operating as a collecting screen upon which these projected sets of terms are superimposed one upon the other. We must, to get Burke right, literally imagine intertextuality as a set of texts superimposed on one another with transecting points of polyphonic meaning. Even our freshmen, in other words, must learn to see incongrous sets of terms as framed by a textual "terministic screen." When we add Burke's metaphor of texts as screens filled with polyphonic language to Iser and Bakhtin's emphasis on the ideas of gaps and openings we have defined to a large degree the problems readers confronted with complex texts face.

The problem of textual function, then, is definable in two ways. Even our freshman readers must understand linguistic polyphony. That essay in the composition anthology is not an object separate from the rest of the

textual or human world. Rather it is literally a screen upon which the visible language of an author and the invisible but equally present language of other texts, of other potential readers, and of others who have thought about the subject but never read the text itself are superimposed. We can, as readers, never experience all these layers of language, but we can, and must when writing critically, use at least some of the invisible language to explain the visible. This "words upon a screen" way of defining the problem of "reading" texts is Burke's.

But understanding linguistic polyphony is not sufficient. To read critically, and to write dialogically, is to understand texts not simply as screens upon which many languages are projected, but also as screens with holes in them. The flat screen of film, in other words, fails us as textual metaphor here. Blanks or gaps, to use Iser, loopholes to use Bakhtin, appear to critical readers as they read because of their ability to superimpose one textual screen upon another, and those gaps and apertures are filled by those same readers' active use of terms from one screen as means of completing the fragmented utterances of another. Gaps become clear because we know as readers what someone else has said, in some other textual screen. Gaps are filled by readers who can complete the textual screen at hand by superimposing parts of other textual screens on it.

How does all this theory apply to the teaching of composition? Certainly the theory itself need not be learned by students. But it should directly effect us as teachers. To give an example, I shall discuss the use of Stephen Gould's "The Guano Ring" in a writing across the curriculum classroom as the text might be taught, or used, in a collaborative workshop.

III. Dialogic Literacy and Intratextuality in Stephen Jay Gould's "The Guano Ring"

Gould's essays in Natural History are prime examples of a new genre. In most cases, they are texts that function among several, competing textual paradigms. In this case, I shall focus on the paradigms of genre and field of inquiry. Let us pose some very general definitions. Natural scientists from Aristotle on through the nineteenth-century are keen observers who either apply deductive principles to observed experience with the idea of demonstrating the truth or falsity of an axiom or principle under consideration, or they are keen observers who withhold commonly-held principles because they wish to work as inductively as possible from observed experience back to general principles. Two textual genres usually come to the aid of these kinds of science--in the first case, scientific exposition enables the deductive scientist to articulate a principle, to gather data and test a hypothesis related to that principle, to predict results based on these deductive observations and processes of demonstration, and to deduce interpretations of nature from the first three stages; in the second case, the inductive observer records data in a log or notebook, often in narrative form, with the idea of evolving a thesis from the process of written observation. The first kind of science writing implies careful relating of all observation to a central principle and hypotheses; the second implies a writer who holds preconceived notions in abeyance while systematically observing, categorizing, and analyzing experience.

A third kind of discourse paradigm has, since fifth-century Greece,

had an important although subordinate place in this scientific, textual tradition. Scientists, constrained by these deductive and inductive conventions, have always manifested an urge to break away from or combine these conventions, to fashion a conversational text that synthesized the forms of oral narrative, of the search for truth in story form, with the rigor of axiomatic analysis and careful observation.[12]

As written literacy took its hold on Greek and all of Western culture, this urge to depart from more basic scientific-textual paradigms resulted in a reformed kind of expository rhetoric in which writers such as Thomas Aquinas, Bacon, Newton, and many other seventeenth and eighteenth-century scientists and philosophers evolved a paradigm both personal and objective in nature and form. The discursiveness of the euphuistic and letter-writing traditions combined with the objectivity of new science discourse to create writing situations in which the writer conformed to inductive or deductive paradigms up to a point, then became sufficiently frustrated with the gaps and holes in these conventional texts to break away from these constraints to establish a more conversational and narrative tone, to move closer to the reader in sharing textual problems, and to include the reader in a transcendent kind of personal-impersonal dialogue concerning method as well as content. Emphasis switched from essentially <u>what</u> questions to questions of <u>how</u> and <u>what.</u> Readers and writers came together as explorers of scientific probability rather than the writer acting as demonstrator of scientific certainty.

The new type of essayistic science writing is in origin and development both oral and written. It brings together the rhetorical

intimacy of speaker and audience intrinsic to oral traditions and the objective methodologies of written literacy. It uses narrative and dramatic structure to form the ongoing exploration of phenomena that writers and readers experience together, yet it retains the basic heuristics and principles of knowledge that have always been to some degree characteristic of the scientist. Only recently has this dialogic textual perspective become an established textual paradigm in the writing of science writers such as Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley, Sheldon Sacks, Richard Selzer, and Stephen Jay Gould.

Let us look at Gould's "The Guano Ring" as an example of this new dialogic perspective on scientific literacy. Gould's writing persona is at first dominated by the combined voices of the two conventional scientific traditions. He is, in the essays' first paragraph, an aphoristic reciter of observed fact, speaking in the voice of the deductive scientist working informally from first principles. In this voice he recites the sailor's "rule for life and work aboard a ship. . . if it moves, salute it; if it doesn't move paint it. . . .(this and subsequent page numbers from Stephen Jay Gould, "The Guano Ring," Natural History 91[Jan. 1982], 12-19). Here, Gould suggests, we have a rule of nature comfortably captured in homespun wisdom. Rhetoricians are reminded that Aristotle often based even scientific enthymemes on maxims or homespun truths. The booby bird's mechanical or instinctual intelligence, Gould goes on to tell us, is often the kind of intelligence attributed to animals, and nineteenth-century natural science argues it to be the result of natural selection, environmentally created and reinforced. To reinforce this deductive text, Gould returns to the sailor's

maxim seven times throughout this relatively short text. In a conversational style, Gould asks his readers to follow him as he examines animal behavior from the perspective provided by the sailor's maxim. In the process of repeatedly applying the sailor's maxim to animal intelligence, Gould establishes himself and his readers in the deductive paradigm.

But the inductive paradigm remains simultaneously influential, creating in Gould's readers a friction between carefully-logged, first-hand observation and deductively-analyzed sailor's maxim. Deductive and inductive sub-texts interact to create rhetorical frictions, with inductive sub-texts controlled by Gould's casual, narrative references to his personal observations of booby-bird behavior: "This summer, while in the Galapagos Islands, I. . . ." (p. 15) or "I was reminded of . . . . (p. 15)." These narrative reflections on personal experience fuse with the sailor's maxim to create what Iser and Bakhtin might call the rhetorical appreciation of an essential gap or negation in this particular text. It is through the friction created by these contending paradigms that Gould manipulates sub-textual structures into a dialogic need to transcend sub-texts to create a third-level text that subsumes the others. A stretch of text like this one--"Parents [of booby-birds] sit on their eggs and young chicks, apparently oblivious to groups of visitors [human tourists] who gawk, gesticulate, and point cameras within inches of their territory; yet I noticed, at first by accident, that any intrusion into a guano ring could alter the behavior of adult birds--from blissful ignorance to directed aggression" (p. 15). Here Gould fuses deductive understanding of the conditioned responses of the birds to human interference with the inductive realization that the conditioned

response itself is far more complex than he had first realized. These birds squawk at humans only when they transgress an inner circle around the birds' nest; yet, they carry out this programmed response because of a complex array of learned patterns, all induced by natural selection and the drive to species survival. What seems purely "dumb" programmed response on the part of the individual is actually evolutionary wisdom on the part of the species. This kind of complex understanding of booby-bird behavior can be handled only when a specialist is able to depart from the textual conventions of his field to fashion a new, textual paradigm.

As educated, non-specialist readers progress through these two conventional paradigms they, too, grow increasingly frustrated with their inadequacies. Both deductive axiom and inductive observation, even taken together, cannot do justice to the complexity of the phenomena. Is the booby-bird as programmed in its responses to environment as we think it is? Is there a higher law behind its programming? Would a more complex set of motives actually help the booby-bird species? Are we simply talking about two different kinds of intelligence--one individualistic and the other collective? These are the types of epistemologcal questions that drive Gould and his informed readers to a new kind of textual paradigm.

Readers of "The Guano Ring" have only the two conventional sub-texts before them as they get to paragraph eleven of this twenty-six paragraph essay. They, like Gould, can answer the essay's implied questions only by stepping out of these paradigms into one that will enable writer and reader to address each other directly, not within the textual space of the inductive or deductive scientist, but in the space of oral dialogue and dialectic.

Written narrative observations and first principles merge together into a third, subsuming textual paradigm, one in which writer and reader address each other more directly and intimately, in which professional scientist and educated amateur are drawn together as interlocutors in a dialogic frame. The felt inadequacies of induction and deduction lead to a kind of personal, scientific metalanguage in which reader and writer are co-explorers in an uncharted world:

> I was reminded of the quip about painting and saluting while observing blue-footed boobies on Hood Island in the Galapagos (paragraph 11).
>
> * * *
>
> By what perverse logic should masked boobies produce two eggs, yet never rear move than one chick invariably branded with the Mark of Cain? (paragraph 18)
>
> * * *
>
> As I argued for siblicide and guano rings, I am prepared to view any specific manifestation of my sailor's intellectual style as adaptation.

These quotations indicate two processes through which the rhetoric of Gould's essay turns the conventional inductive and deductive paradigms into a third metalinguistic dialogue between reader and writer.

First, Gould's shifting viewpoint fuses I-writer and you-reader in a casual, reflective frame-of-mind in which inductive or deductive method taken alone are seen as providing steps toward a higher understanding of nature--the simple, first-person reminiscence in excerpt one, the rhetorical

question in excerpt two, and the recapitulation of an argument only the writer and reader share in excerpt three. All three excerpts combine to establish a third text that seems to be but is not bound by the conventions of induction and deduction.

But a second process combines with the informal relationship of reader-writer created by Gould's style. In paragraph eleven, where Gould's personal, narrative rendering of a combined I-we persona is first firmly established, Gould also begins to create a distance between the I-we persona and the subject-matter of the essay: the booby bird's nesting behavior and natural law. As the essay progresses we move further and further back from the language of actual simple deduction and induction into a language regulated by distance from the subject being explored. Note the use of 'perverse logic' in excerpt two and of the self-reflective past tense in three. In each case, the tone is marked by distance from, in the first instance, the animal behavior itself, and, in the second instance, from an earlier argument posed in this essay, by Gould himself.

In "The Guano Ring" we have a skilled natural scientist who rhetorically reproduces in his text a way of knowing that seems to have become, in the past thirty years, a new convention for science writers who write for nonspecialist audiences. Aware of their conventions and the restrictions they place on knowing a complex world, these writers, pressed by their own recognitions of complexity, guide readers back through an inquiry that subsumes and transcends more traditional epistemologies. In this essay, Gould, acknowledging both the limits of strict Darwinianism (natural

selection) and of strict physiological interpretations of behavior, produces a text that distances readers from both perspectives, and through a form of dialogic questioning and hypothesizing, creates a new perspective in which the physiological and Darwinian perspectives are interdependent, where genetic inheritance, environmental conditions, and physiological make-up combine to define our interpretation of animal behavior.

In one form or another, many of the personal essays written by professionals like Gould or Lewis Thomas for the editorial pages of every issue of Natural History magazine and the New England Journal of Medicine are working within these three kinds of textual paradigm.[13] The specialists who contribute to and read these journals are joined by intelligent, knowledgeable, non-specialist readers who are interested in science in general, know the general deductive and inductive paradigms, but know as well the limitations of these methods. These types of essayistic science writers are a new breed, expert in the methods of their fields, but also expert enough rhetoricians to know how to fill the holes in their specialist texts with an oral-written dialogue based on a dialectical understanding of subject.

Gould goes on in this essay to weave together deductive principle (he uses the sailor's maxim at least seven times to re-establish his deduction describing animal intelligence), inductive observation (he refers at least five times in the essay to his own and other naturalists' observations of the booby bird), and dialogic narrative interruptions of these more conventional paradigms. It is the interplay of these three types of textual paradigms that makes this essay persuasive, for by sharing in each paradigm the

informed reader comes to value Gould's character, comes to see him as a man knowledgeable and experienced in the methods of science, yet able to step out of his laboratory jacket when necessary simply to have a careful but friendly conversation that carries his knowledge to a higher and more human level of understanding. Method, knowledge, and rhetoric combine to create an effective ethos, or ethical appeal, in a world that is too complex to be known through one kind of text alone.

IV. Critical Reading, Intratextuality, and the Writing Across the Curriculum Classroom

Essays by writers such as Gould and Lewis Thomas are central to our approaches to writing in the general education curriculum. We are finally recognizing that no truly writerly text, to use Roland Barthes' term, is directed by any one disciplinary paradigm or way of knowing (pp. 4-6). At the undergraduate level, this means that we must teach students to read in a way that will enable them to write while employing several paradigms at once, and to exploit basic fictional narrative methods to fill the gaps in their texts that are left by more field-specific paradigms.

I can best explain how appreciation of intratextuality in reading can develop the ability to use intratextuality in producing texts by explaining in some detail what informed readers do in responding to Gould's "The Guano Ring." Then, I shall suggest two sequences of classroom activities that work toward turning informed readers into writers who can use their understanding of intratextuality as they write. The first involves students in dialogic responses to particular utterances in Gould's text; the second proposes a

prereading sequence of activities that will help students appreciate the interplay of subtexts in Gould's essay.

Both these applications depend for their coherence on the realization that collaborative learning and literacy must come together around a theory that is established on the presence, the palpable effects of textuality on the social group. The group cannot negotiate knowledge without this textual presence. This textual presence does not, however, mechanistically control or determine meaning. It serves as a vehicle for the social construction of meaning and knowledge.

Let us begin by positing a classroom situation in which Bakhtin's distinction between "utterance" and sentence is the base for group negotiation of texts. Bakhtin establishes this distinction in his essay "Speech Genres," where he argues that utterances belong to the genre of oral speech, learned primarily in childhood. Sentences, in contrast, belong to written speech. Utterances, because they are oral in nature, depend on context and dialogic response from interlocutors for their completion; they are formed, in other words, with respondents in mind. Sentences, because they are written and cover defined textual spaces, come complete with a sense of closure, where the boundaries of clause and sentence govern the completion of predication. But, Bakhtin asserts, complex writers have always worked against the monologic structures of writing itself (remember Plato, The Phaedrus, and his arguments against the false rhetoric of written texts) to create texts in which sentences were to be taken by readers as dialogic utterances, completed only by the act of reading. Gould accomplishes this kind of dialogic literacy in "The Guano Ring" by positing conventional

inductive and deductive subtexts, by offering a third subtext of essentially oral, writer-reader dialogue that subsumes these subtexts, and by using the interplay of all three subtexts to open the writing-reading process to dialogue itself. How do we, as teachers, engage students in this kind of dialogic, intratextual reading?

The answer to this question is contained in the collaborative method itself. Two general kinds of activities ought to provide a base for such dialogic reading. First, students must use expressive writing (what Vygotsky might have called externalized inner speech) to objectify their attempts to complete Gould's textual utterances. This is best accomplished by establishing journal or logbook writing conventions in every writing across the curriculum course.[14] These conventions provide an ongoing structure within which students can develop personal reactions of both an objective (the scientist's logbook) and subjective (the writer's journal) kind to particular utterances in Gould's text. This process of responding in writing to professional texts such as Gould's can begin in workshops, where each workshop group can go through an assigned part of Gould's text to mark particular utterances for response. After marking these key utterances for response, the group informally explores possible responses and how they might tie in with a larger pattern in the Gould text. With this discussion behind them, students can write in their journals and logs at home, working out their own completions of Gould's utterances, which can then become the base for group discussion in a subsequent class.

Suppose we take Gould's use of the sailor's maxim as opening gambit as the point of our hypothetical group response. Let us also suppose that

the group's initial reaction is simply "so what?" This leads to the basic supposition that Gould, in making a written text, has a reason for opening with the sailor's maxim. If the group supposes Gould to have a reason for introducing the maxim, how can it find that reason? It can find that reason only by reading ahead at least a page or two to find a pattern behind the maxim's use, and by using evidence of that pattern and personal knowledge to interpret the text. This is where journal and log writing comes in. Both involve readers in writing about text before they have "finished" reading it. Both force readers to treat Gould's sentences as utterances that need conversational completion. And both log and journal entries can be negotiated by workshop groups to produce socially-constructed interpretations of Gould's text.

Another kind of pedagogical activity can be tied in with log and journal writing. We have earlier established both inductive and deductive subtexts in Gould's essay. Students will recognize these subtexts much more easily if they are asked to carry out a few deductive and inductive experiments of their own before they read Gould's essay. One group of students might be asked to demonstrate a simple scientific principle--from an introductory Physics or biology class--for the rest of the class. This demonstration could be summarized in writing by the group and critiqued in writing by others in the class. Another group might be asked to observe closely an animal's behavior, to record the observations in detail, and to present their inductions to the class for analysis and response.

Both these kinds of writing activities are ways of exploring the dialogic nature of texts <u>before</u> students construct general interpretations of

their meaning. Both, in themselves, are simple assignments. What makes them powerful is the teacher's understanding of the theory of literacy that lies behind them. When we, as teachers, understand the dialogic nature of all linguistic acts, we can subject the text that we ask students to read to the kind of analysis that I have applied to Gould's "The Guano Ring." Then, we can construct the kind of collabrative writing exercises that will help students respond to text dialogically, to help them develop a feel for text that results in disciplined but open-ended inquiry, rather than in closed responses to someone else's pre-packaged knowledge.

In this type of collaborative class, texts are not desparaged as closed containers of meaning that exist only to be violated by rapacious readers. Nor are texts treated as objects of reverence, never to be influenced by the eristics of everyday conversation. Rather, the professional texts that we use to teach our students come to function as they do in any sophisticated writing and reading community--as screens through which we get a closer look at ourselves and others than we are ever afforded by non-verbal communication.

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Endnotes

[1] The most comprehensive, condensed histories of the evolution from oral to written literacy are contained in the books of Walter J. Ong. His most recent book, Orality and Literacy, is a condensation of his interpretations of the differences in consciousness that Ong believes are promoted by oral and written literacies. See also Havelock on Plato's place in the evolution of oral and written literacy in ancient Greece. Morson's anthology of critical essays on the work of Bakhtin provides a useful overview of Bakhtin's ideas of monologic and dialogic literacy.

[2] Bruffee reviews recent epistemological and language theory as it applies to collaborative learning; Trimbur reviews empirical research on the effects of collaborative learning on student writing; Wiener discusses methods of evaluating student writing in a collaborative learning curriculum. None of these theorists considers in depth the function of texts in collaborative workshops.

[3] Rorty poses an argument against the notion of knowledge as based on relationships between an objective world and a subjective knower; Geertz questions the possibility of objectivity in our knowledge of human cultures; Fish argues that "interpretive communities" control our experiences of literary texts, not the signs in the texts themselves.

[4] Bakhtin presents his ideas on textual functions indirectly. In Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, Bakhtin argues that human psyche is inevitably constructed by two perpendicular activities: lateral, or horizontal relationships with other individuals in specific speech acts and

internal or vertical relationships between the outer world and his or her own psyche (p. 39). I am dependent on Emerson's description of this relationship in this note (p. 25). This interdependency of internal-external activities in the psyche accounts for individual reader's response to text: already internalized conventional responses mix with immediate interpretation of specific speech acts (texts) to create a textual dynamic in which meaning evolves from the relationships surrounding the signs in the text itself. Iser proposes a theory of text in which ". . . it is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism . . . whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections--for filling in the gaps left by the text itself (p. 280)." See Iser's "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Ficion" for a detailed discussion of the function of "gaps" in literary texts.

[5] Because they see the readers as the primary agent for constructing meaning in texts, reader-response theorists give prominence to subjective experience as it informs the textual object. Bleich provides the fullest perspective on the subjectivist perspective on text in Subjective Criticism; he has revised that position to one of interdependency of subject and object in the more recent "Cognitive Stereoscopy and the Study of Language and Literature."

[6] Hirsch's description of how conventions of genre enable writers to inform texts with their own intentions and his description of how readers can objectively re-constitute those intentions aligns itself with earlier work in biblical hermeneutics.

[7] McCormick provides a useful review of the educational and social

implications of subjectivist, reader-oriented criticism.

[8] Culler applied structuralist principles to reading in Structuralist Poetics: ". . . a poem presupposes conventions of reading which the author may work against, which he can transform, but which are the conditions of his discourse (p. 30)." Because these conventions are shared, readers and writers can agree to disagree without threatening the essentially objective bases of both processes.

[9] In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin emphasizes the writer's use of the loophole to place potentially multipliable meanings into texts: " A loophole is the retention for oneself [as writer] of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words. . . . This potential other meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole should be an ultimate word and it does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final period (p. 233)." Of course, if writers use words as loopholes, then readers should cooperate by attempting to fill loopholes. In this verbal give and take lies the essence of dialogic language.

[10] Paolo Freire' latest book, The Politics of Education, develops this idea of literacy as a means of altering the consciousness of those who use it.

[11] Burke refers to these concepts throughout his works. A relatively simple description is included in Language as Symbolic Action (p. 50): "Whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another. Within that field there can be different screens, each with its ways of directing the attention and shaping the range of observations

implicit in the given terminology." Burke develops a longer and more complex discussion of terminologies and perspectives in Attitudes Toward History (pp. 260 ff), where he applies it to scientific thought. See also Perspectives by Incongruity (1965).

[12] This argument concerning the discourse of modern science seems on its surface contrary to that of Halloran and Whitburn, who trace modern science's emphasis on a reductive notion of Cicero's plain style back to the seventeenth-century and to the ideas of Peter Ramus. I agree with their analysis as far as it applies to normative technical discourse, but I would also argue that major developers of science paradigms have consistently departed from this oversimplified emphasis on plain exposition. They often wrote discourse that combined oral narrative and exposition, much in the way that our more modern science essayists work.

[13] Thomas' essays from the New England Journal of Medicine have later appeared in The Lives of a Cell, (New York: Bantam, 1975) winner of the National Book Award in 1975, and The Medusa and the Snail (New York: Viking, 1979). Gould's Natural History essays have been reprinted most recently in The Flamingo's Smile (New York: Norton, 1985).

[14] David Hamilton (p. 788) develops a useful distinction between the scientist's use of log to denote a written, objective record of a natural phenomenon and the humanist's use of the term writer's journal, a much more personal written record of experience.

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